

Christian Publishing Pioneer Passes

✖ Industry leaders have paid tribute to longtime Christian publisher and CBA founding member Robert L. Kregel, who died Sunday (June 24) after a brief illness. Regarded as a pioneering giant in the Christian product industry, the former president of Grand Rapids, Kregel Inc. was 92.

After his father died in 1939, Kregel took over the family's used book business at age 20 and expanded the company into a publishing house and bookstore chain. In 1949, he began publishing classic reprints under the Kregel Publications name. Kregel Inc. now includes Kregel Publications, its Spanish imprint, Editorial Portavoz, and two Kregel Parable Christian Stores in the Grand Rapids area.

Kregel, who served a two-year term as CBA's president from 1960-1962, attended the association's first meeting at Chicago's LaSalle Hotel in 1950.

Kregel was "very supportive of the association forming with its dual purpose of getting the Word of God to as many people as possible and bringing the industry together to encourage cooperation (in order) to

achieve
excellence in business and ministry,” CBA Executive Director
Curtis
Riskey told *Christian Retailing*.

During Kregel’s term as
CBA president, the association embarked on its first
international
outreach, funding the establishment of Christian stores in
other
countries and partnering with Evangelical Literature Outreach
to train
bookstore owners and staff abroad, Riskey said.

Kregel would be
remembered as “one of the strong shoulders that CBA and the
Christian
retail industry stand on today,” Riskey added. “His
unconditional love
for others, ethical standards and commitment to the Lord
through his
work and evangelism exemplify what this industry is all about.
His
legacy continues today as the mantle passes to his children to
keep up
the good work.”

Kregel received a Gold Medallion Lifetime
Achievement Award from the Evangelical Christian Publishers
Association
(ECPA) in 1989 at the end of his three-year term of service on
the
association’s board.

Kregel was “one of the pioneering giants in
the industry who devoted his life to communicating effectively
about
Christ at a time when distribution was far less than it is

today, and there was little money in it," ECPA President Mark Kuyper told *Christian Retailing*. "He was a dedicated man who built a solid business and ran it with Christian conviction and care."

Kregel

President Jim Kregel said that his father was passionate about the

Christian publishing industry. "My dad loved connecting people with

books," he said. "He loved books, and he loved sharing them with others.

My dad's great legacy is how he saw the best in others and tried to

help them."

A memorial service was held Thursday at Calvary Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. Kregel is survived by five children, 14 grandchildren

and 26 great-grandchildren. His wife of 63 years, Betty, died five

months ago.